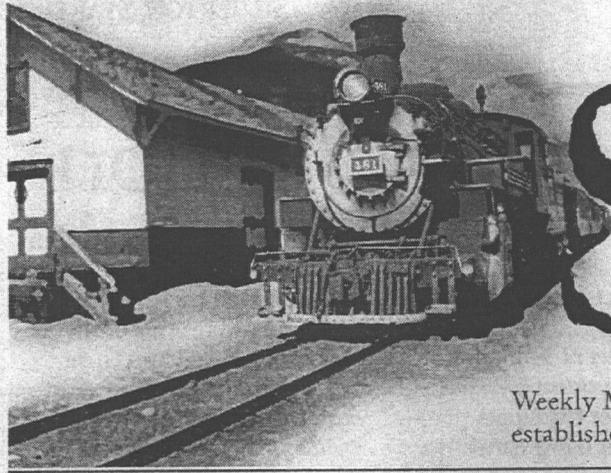


Volume 136, issue 13, September 23, 2010



Silverton STANDARD & the MINER

50¢

SILVERTON'S PIONEER NEWSPAPER SINCE 1875

Weekly Miner
established 1875

Silverton Standard
established 1889

IN BRIEF



Tate Reaves

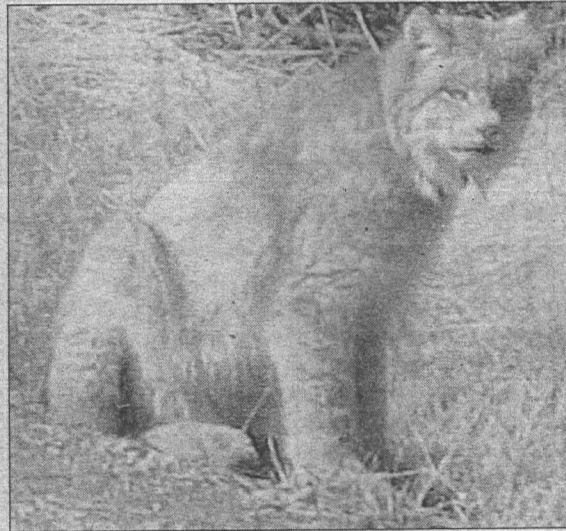
Shakespearean women highlighted in Sept. 23-26 shows

A Theatre Group is presenting "The Women of Shakespeare," a unique look at the queens, ladies, wives and witches of Shakespeare, performed by Tate Reaves of Silverton.

The performances are scheduled for Sept. 23, 24, and 25 at 7 p.m., and Sunday, Sept. 26 at 2 p.m. at the Grand Imperial Theatre.

For reservations, phone 387-5337. Or stop by The Lookout Shop on Blair Street.

A lynx in the Mineral Creek area is pictured in this 2009 file photo.



No MISSING LYNX

State officials declare success in efforts to restore cats' population in Colorado

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Colorado Division of Wildlife Director Tom Remington said that biologists are now transition-

ing to monitor the cats' long-term persistence in Colorado's high country.

The announcement comes following the discovery this spring of 14 lynx kittens in five separate dens, including the first two dens documented in Summit County, outside the core reintroduction

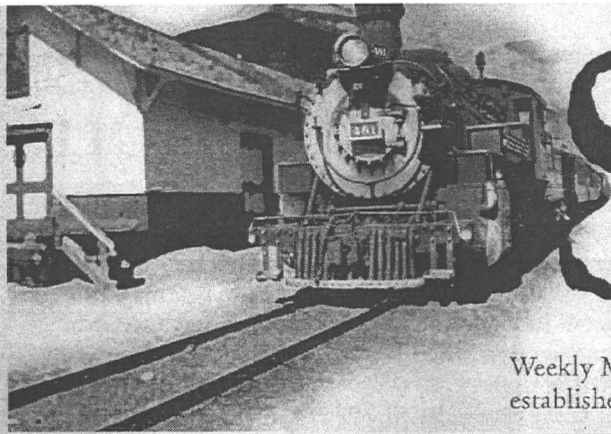
See LYNX, Page 6

Still seeking a cleaner creek



Stakeholders plot strategy to address complicated issue of mine runoff

By Mark Esper



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Concert to benefit school booster club

San Juan College Concert Band, under the direction of

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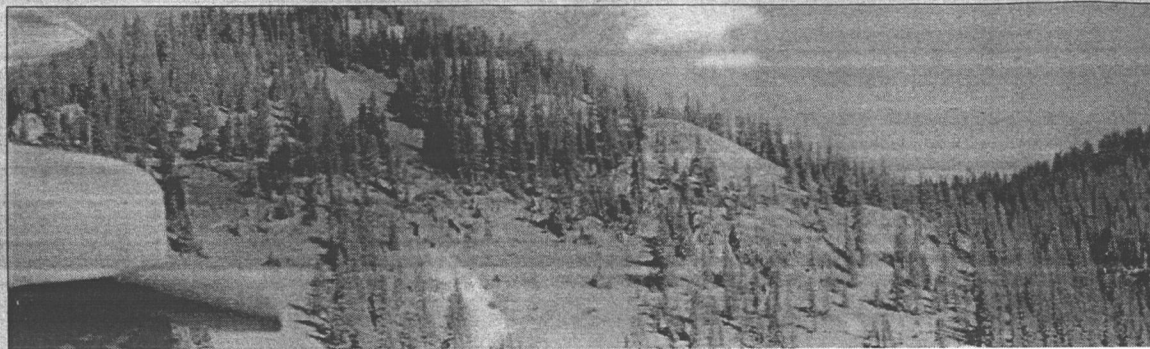
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See LYNX, Page 6

Still seeking a cleaner creek



Stakeholders plot strategy to address complicated issue of mine runoff

By Mark Esper

Improving water quality in Cement Creek won't be easy and it won't be cheap.

The Animas River Stakeholders

Band, under the direction of Keith Cochrane, will present a benefit concert on Saturday, Sept. 25, for the Silverton School Booster Club.

Songs that will be performed include: John Williams in Concert "H2Overture," "Triple Treat," "The Untitled March," "The Cowboys," "Just a Closer Walk," "Capriccio Espagnol," "Pirates of the Caribbean," and "Stars and Stripes."

The concert is scheduled for 6 p.m. at First Congregational Church. There is no admission fee but donations will be graciously accepted.

The booster club is a Silverton School parent and community organization which raises funds to help with expedition trips and other financial areas that support student needs.

Standard, KSJC to sponsor Candidates' Night Forum Oct. 19

A Candidates' Night Forum for those running for county office in the Nov. 2 election is scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 19, from 7 to 9 p.m.

The event, sponsored by the *Silverton Standard & the Miner* and KSJC — Silverton Community Radio, will be held at Silverton Town Hall.

Candidates for county assessor, county clerk and county commissioner will be on hand to answer questions.

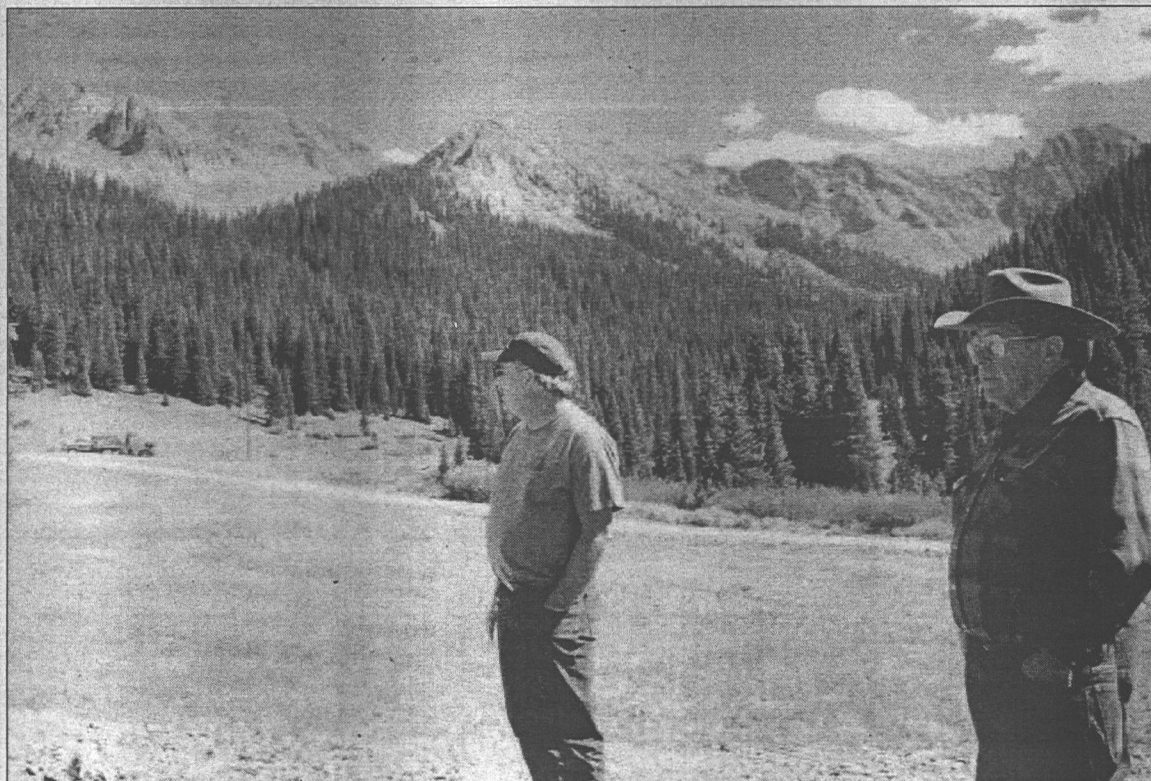
Questions may be submitted in advance to: Editor,

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Mark Esper/Silverton Standard & the Miner

From left, Steve Fearn of Silverton, Sabrina Forrest of the Environmental Protection Agency's Denver office, Kay Zillich of the Bureau of Land Management, and Peter Butler of Durango discuss water quality issues associated with mine runoff above Gladstone. To the right, tailings from the Bonita and Red Mine are visible. Below, Butler, left, and Fearn survey the scene below the American Tunnel at Gladstone.



Group is still "brainstorming" ways to address the issue, aware that past efforts have had some unintended consequences and the problem is remarkably complex.

"We need more information to make a decision that is correct. The problem is big, complex, and complicated."

Bill Simon, coordinator, Animas River Stakeholders Group

The stakeholders group led a tour of various mine-cleanup projects throughout the region last Thursday, Sept. 16, pointing to some successes — and some ongoing

challenges — in the group's efforts to reduce contamination in the watershed from decades of mining.

Bill Simon, coordinator of the stakeholders group, which was formed as a collaborative approach to water quality issues in 1994, said Cement Creek has seen a steady increase in metals loading since a treatment plant at Gladstone was shut down in 2004.

That shutdown was the result of a court order in a lawsuit involving a complicated property dispute.

The water treatment plant had been operating since the early 1980s, in conjunction with the Sunnyside Mine, which closed in 1991.

Just above the site in Gladstone where the treatment

See WATER, Page 6

Brent Westlund for County Assessor

ERNIE KUHLMAN

★ FOR COUNTY COMMISSIONER ★



VOTE

PATRICIA "LIZZIE" KOST
SAN JUAN COUNTY CLERK & RECORDER

LYNX, from Page 1

area. As only some breeding-age female lynx are equipped with satellite collars, the 14 kits represent the minimum number of lynx births this year.

Between 2003 and 2010, researchers documented that at least 141 lynx kittens were born in Colorado. Analysis of observational data indicates that the cats' reproductive rate has outpaced mortality in the 11 years since the reintroduction program was launched, which is the hallmark of a self-sustaining population. DQW biologists believe lessons learned from this program could be helpful in developing a plan to reintroduce wolverine to Colorado.

Gov. Bill Ritter hailed the success of the reintroduction project.

"Protecting and enhancing Colorado's wildlife heritage takes hard work and dedication," Ritter said. "I commend

the Division of Wildlife for this accomplishment. It's an example of what we can do when we have a vision and the will to see it through."

Remington said the lynx project is one of the most ambitious and significant state-led reintroductions in recent years.

"The Division of Wildlife has a long tradition of restoring and recovering native species in Colorado," Remington said. "This is a tradition that ranks among the division's finest achievements. I applaud the wildlife professionals whose commitment and expertise have made the lynx project a success. Today is a proud day for the agency."

The DOW began reintroducing lynx in 1999, releasing lynx captured in Alaska and Canada into the San Juan Mountains.

From 1999 to 2006, the DOW introduced a total of 218 lynx,

monitoring radio- and satellite-collared lynx as they colonized the core area and expanded their range into other parts of Colorado's high country. The mid-sized lynx has proved adept at adjusting to Colorado's rugged mountains, finding both food and habitat necessary for successful reproduction in at least six of the past eight years.

Lynx reproductive rates have varied greatly since kittens were first documented in 2003. After den visits identified 16 kittens in 2003, researchers found 39 kittens in 2004; 50 kittens in 2005; 11 kittens in 2006; 11 kittens in 2009; 14 kittens in 2010.

During the 2006, 2009 and 2010 seasons, DOW field crews documented that Colorado-born lynx had successfully produced third-generation Colorado kittens. In 2010, researchers estimated that between 30 and 40 percent of female lynx bore litters of

WATER, from Page 1

plant once stood lies the portal to the American Tunnel, which was sealed starting in the late 1990s by a series of three bulkheads.

It was hoped the bulkheads would limit discharge of contaminated water from the mine, and for a time, that appeared to be the case.

A problem develops

"About four years ago we realized we had a problem we hadn't anticipated — discharge from other openings," Simon said.

Steve Fearn, a Silverton mining engineer, suggested that the American Tunnel had effectively drained a lot of water from higher elevations, but when it was sealed, it allowed water to start

"Our focus at the Animas River Stakeholders Group has always been to improve water quality. We're not interested in trying to establish who is at fault."

Steve Fearn

technological breakthroughs."

Who will pay for it?

One looming issue is exactly how such a treatment facility would be financed.

"I think we have people will-

rect," Simon said. "The problem is big, complex, and complicated."

Simon said that dealing with such water-quality issues is a relatively new process.

"We're just in the initial stages and need to spend some time to figure out where we're at."

At the Red and Bonita

Stopping at the Red and Bonita Mine north of Gladstone, the group surveyed the scene — a steady flow gushing from the mine opening and spilling over a pile of mine waste into Cement Creek.

Upstream from the mine site, the creek appears relatively clear, but below the abandoned mine, rocks have been painted red by the exposure to metals

SAN JUAN COUNTY Clerk & Recorder

The skills I will bring to the San Juan County Clerk and Recorder's office reflect the mission statement of the Colorado County Clerks

Association, which is to "create an organizational structure that supports best practices, use of technology and appropriate legislation through teamwork, communication, and mutual respect."

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drained a lot of water from higher elevations, but when it was sealed, it allowed water to start recharging.

Soon, water was coming out of other mines in the same area, linked to the tunnel by various fractures in the rock.

"No one anticipated the amount of water coming from the Gold King and the Red and Bonita," Fearn said.

Now, about 250 gallons per minute are gushing from the Gold King Mine opening above the tunnel. The Mogul and the Red and Bonita mines are also showing increases in discharge as water has risen some 1,000 feet above the American Tunnel level after the bulkheads were put in there.

Peter Butler of Durango, a member of the stakeholders group, said that now some 600 gallons per minute are coming from various sites above the American Tunnel.

"It's the biggest (metals) loading area in the basin," Butler said. "It's an area we'd really like to do something with."

But exactly how to deal with the problem is still up in the air, and may involve a combination of more bulkheads and testing various treatment options.

"What we'd like to do is develop a demonstration plant for pilot studies," Simon said.

He said the water treatment facility could use different technologies to "see which ones are effective, and what the costs are."

And Simon said if a method is found to be successful, it could be expanded and left as a permanent asset on Cement Creek.

"We're looking at all and any possibilities at this point," Simon said. "We need to make some

would be financed.

"I think we have people willing to step up and help us with that, including the EPA, the BLM (Bureau of Land Management) and USGS (U.S. Geological Survey)."

Simon said that of the hundreds of abandoned mines in the Animas drainage, some 34 of them account for about 90 percent of the metals loading. He estimated some 400 pounds of zinc per day are being poured into the drainage. Much of that was previously being taken out by the treatment plant at Gladstone.

Simon says he sees the proposed pilot treatment facility at Gladstone to be the best option to address the problem.

Such a system, he said, "would bring in different technologies at a pilot level and see how they do."

He said the rest of the nation could then "capitalize on our experience."

"Is it pie in the sky? Yeah, but there's not a lot of options and there's no one else doing it," Simon said.

Fearn noted that such a treatment plant would still leave vast amounts of sludge to be dealt with.

"There's got to be a better way than creating millions of pounds of sludge," Fearn said.

Simon noted that the EPA is also considering installing more bulkheads to plug mines as an alternative to water treatment.

He cautioned that given the unexpected consequences from previous efforts, more research may be in order.

"We need more information to make a decision that is cor-

but below the abandoned mine, rocks have been painted red by the exposure to metals.

Kay Zillich, who has surveyed many mine sites in the region for the Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service, said the mine opening "was essentially dry" prior to the installation of the bulkheads in the American Tunnel far below.

Zillich pointed to a wetland below the mine that appeared devoid of vegetation.

"Plugging the Bonita may reinvigorate that fen and also help with natural treatment," by forcing water from the mine to filter through more rock and soils.

Steve Way, of the EPA Response Program in Denver, said the agency plans to do some test drilling at the Bonita site later this year to see if putting a bulkhead in the mine opening makes sense.

"The rock may be too fractured to support a bulkhead," Way said.

The agency is also looking at the feasibility of controlling the flow from the mine to deliver it to a treatment system.

"It's the magnitude of the water flowing from the Gold King and the Red and Bonita that's the real issue," Fearn said. "And the water quality is very poor."

Fearn said he'd like to see some immediate steps taken to improve water quality while working toward more permanent solutions.

"Our focus at the Animas River Stakeholders Group has always been to improve water quality," Fearn said. "We're not interested in trying to establish who is at fault."